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# Gates takes heat; OK seems likely

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Acting CIA Director Robert Gates appears on his way to being confirmed as director after two days of tough questioning by the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Wednesday, Gates bore the brunt of the panel's frustration about being kept in the dark on the Iranian arms deal for more than nine months. He was accused of "passing the buck" and "playing it safe."

But after the confirmation hearing ended, Sen. William Cohen, R-Maine, vice chairman of the panel, said there was "no new information" that appeared to jeopardize Gates' confirmation.

He would replace William Casey, who resigned after suffering a brain tumor.

Gates was pressed on what he had done last October about CIA "speculation" that profits from arms sales were diverted to the Nicaraguan contra rebels. He said he and Casey told former national security adviser John Poindexter.

"Did you ever ask Mr. Poindexter point blank, 'Is there a diversion to the contras?'" asked Sen. Bill Bradley, D-N.J.

Gates: "No sir, I did not."

"In hindsight," Gates said, "I may have made a tactical mistake by not launching an aggressive investigation. But what I did was done to get it in the hands of people who had more knowledge."

The committee won't vote on recommending the nomination to the full Senate until after Feb. 26, when the Tower Commission reports on its investigation of the National Security Council, which carried out the secret arms sales.

About Gates' actions, Cohen said it's "unreasonable to think that a new deputy director would push Casey aside and go right to the president."

## What he says he knew

Here's what acting CIA Director Robert Gates says he knew about diversion of profits from the Iran arms deal to contra rebels:

■ Oct. 1: Gates, then deputy director, hears "speculation" from a senior intelligence analyst that arms sales profits were diverted to the Nicaraguan rebels.

■ Oct. 7: Gates tells CIA Director William Casey of "possibility" of diversion of funds. Gates says Casey was as "startled as I was."

■ Oct. 9: Gates, Casey hear "cryptic remark" from Lt. Oliver North about "Swiss accounts and the contras." Neither pursues.

■ Oct. 15: Gates and Casey give national security adviser John Poindexter a memo that mentions suspected diversion of funds.

■ Oct. 17-30: Gates on overseas trip; jokes he left to "seek a safer climate."

■ Nov. 6: Casey, with Gates present, tells Poindexter to have White House counsel Peter Wallison investigate contra fund reports. Wallison not informed; Gates says Poindexter "didn't trust Wallison to keep his mouth shut."

■ Nov. 21: Casey testifies on Iran, doesn't mention possible contra connection.

■ Nov. 25: Attorney General Edwin Meese discloses diversion of funds; North is fired, Poindexter resigns.

■ Dec. 4: Gates testifies it would have been irresponsible for Casey to tell panel "suppositions. . . . We really didn't have very much."

■ Dec. 15: Casey hospitalized with brain tumor.